United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding says "shelling must stop" in Osijek and announces that Commander of United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia expected to assume his responsibilities in eastern Slavonia "in a matter of days"; Security Council President holds bilateral consultations on request for admission to United Nations membership by Slovenia and Croatia.

+ NGO representatives express disappointment over draft convention on climate change, saying it is "a retreat" from previous commitments; Committee Chairman Jean Ripert says action must follow negotiations.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees seeks clarification of "some aspects of repatriation agreement" reached this week between Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh, concerning 237,000 refugees.

+ Secretary-General welcomes "innovative approach" of Global Coalition for Africa in message delivered at meeting in Kampala.

+ Organization of African Unity to send representative into Somalia to work with Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Mohammed Sahnoun.

+ Third plenary session of Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament discusses destruction of Iraq's chemical weapons and ongoing monitoring activities to ensure that Iraq does not reacquire proscribed weapons.

+ United Nations Pavilion in 1992 Genoa exhibition to be held from 15 May to 15 August on theme of Oceans will feature new communications technologies.

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Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, announced today in eastern Slavonia that the Commander of the United Nations

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Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), Satish Nambiar, was expected to assume his responsibilities in that region in a matter of days. Mr. Goulding made the announcement as he inspected United Nations troop locations there.

At a meeting in Osijek this afternoon, military and civilian leaders urged the earliest possible assumption by UNPROFOR of its responsibilities in that area. Mr. Goulding told the press that he was "distressed" at how much more damage the city had sustained since his last visit in December and said he felt strongly that "the shelling must stop". He said the Force would begin operations in a few days after some details were finalized in Belgrade and Zagreb.

The Under-Secretary-General will conclude his talks on Bosnia-Herzegovina with a series of meetings in Zagreb tomorrow, 9 May.

Meanwhile, President of the Security Council, Peter Hohenfellner (Austria), today held bilateral consultations with Council members on requests by Slovenia and Croatia for admission to United Nations membership, a United Nations spokesman said today.

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At a press briefing this morning, Committee Chairman Jean Ripert told correspondents that the most important exercise was to make sure that action would follow after the long hours of negotiations. The Convention aims to limit carbon dioxides and other so-called greenhouse gases that could lead to global warming and disrupt the earth's climate.

Representatives of 30 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) expressed disappointment over the level of commitment expressed in the draft document, stating in a press communiqué that "most governments have taken a narrow and parochial view". They further said that the draft was a "retreat from the commitments called for by the Second World Climate Conference", and urged the governments "to demonstrate their commitment by announcing their action programs at the Earth Summit next month".

The Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations also pledged to continue "to monitor the legal development and future implementation of the convention", to demonstrate both local and global solutions, and work to maximise the positive opportunities that lie ahead of us".

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is seeking clarification of some aspects of a repatriation agreement reached this week between the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh, concerning 237,000 refugees.

Sylvana Foa, a UNHCR spokeswoman, said today in Geneva that the Agency was concerned over the agreement's time-frame calling for the repatriation of 5,000 people every other day. There was no reference in the agreement, she said, "to any mechanism for ensuring that the return is voluntary," nor was

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there any provision for monitoring the safety of the refugees once they returned to Myanmar. Ms. Foa said the refugees were continuing to arrive in Bangladesh at the rate of 1,500 per day on average, giving rise to doubt that conditions in Myanmar were appropriate for repatriation.

After recent talks between the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordinator for Emergency Relief, Jan Eliasson; Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Foreign Ministers of Myanmar and Bangladesh, the United Nations offered its assistance in the repatriation of the refugees. UNHCR has also appealed for some $27 million to aid the refugees, but so far, the Agency said, only half of that amount had been raised.

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Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the "innovative approach" of the Global Coalition for Africa to helping improve conditions on the African continent.

In a message read out today by James O.C. Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, at a two-day meeting of the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) in Kampala, Uganda, the Secretary-General said "the economic and political crisis gripping most African countries had many profound dimensions leading to a large number of international initiatives on behalf of the continent".

The Secretary-General also pledged the continued committment of the world body to assist Africa in its quest for development, indicating that the continent would remain among the main priorities of the United Nations. Despite the ongoing streamlining of the United Nations Secretariat, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said the Organization would enhance its capacity to be of greater assistance to developing countries.

The short-term objectives of the Global Coalition for Africa for the conference are to serve as a supportive mechanism to the action of African Governments to achieve economic growth, poverty alleviation and social progress.

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The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has announced that it will send a representative into Somalia to work with Mohammed Sahnoun, the newly appointed Special Representative for Somalia of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The announcement was made by Salim Ahmed Salim, the Secretary-General of the OAU, at a press conference in Geneva this week.

Mr. Salim said his organization was working in concert and in consultation with the United Nations to help bring about unity and national reconciliation in Somalia. He pointed to what he called "the futility of this war", which he said had been a distress not only to the international community "but to many of us who will always consider Somalia as one of the

most homogenous societies". Mr. Salim stressed the importance of providing humanitarian relief for the people of Somalia, first in Mogadishu and then in the rest of the country.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative arrived in Mogadishu on Monday, 4 May, to hold talks with Interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed and General Mohamed Farah Aidid on the question of sending a 500-member United Nations battalion to provide security for the humanitarian assistance programme. While in Mogadishu this week, Mr. Sahnoun has inspected the unloading of 5,000 tonnes of food-aid at the port of Mogadishu for the first time since hostilities broke out last November.

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The destruction of Iraq's chemical weapons and ongoing monitoring activities to ensure that Iraq does not reacquire proscribed weapons were among the issues discussed during a meeting of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, earlier this week.

During its third plenary session at Headquarters from 4 to 6 May, the Commission heard detailed reports of its activities in connection with the disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, as requested by the Security Council. It also discussed the procedures for health, safety and environmental aspects of its work and expressed its satisfaction with the progress made.

The meetings were chaired by the Executive Chairman, Rolf Ekeus, and the Deputy Executive Chairman, Michael Newlin.

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The United Nations will present an exhibition on the oceans future at a Pavilion belonging to the Organization. The show, which will be part of the International Specialized Exhibition to be held in Genoa, Italy, from 15 May to 15 August 1992, will feature new communications technology.

The exhibition will commemorate the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's voyage of discovery to the Americas and will focus on the main theme of "The Oceans -- Our Future". That theme is being developed through various aspects of ocean-related activities, including a global legal framework aimed at protecting and better governing the use of the oceans and their resources. The high-tech exhibit will make use of videos, colour photographs, slide projectors and multi-media presentations produced on high-resolution computer systems.

The exhibition, which will be presented in both English and Italian, is being sponsored by the United Nations and the 15 agencies and bodies of the the United Nations system.

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